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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0031
INFO EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0019
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0019

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KINGSTON 000712

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
STATE FOR WHA/CAR (JMACK-WILSON) (BALVARADO) (VDEPIRRO) (WSMITH)
L/LEI (CHOLLAND) (AKLUESNER)
INR/IAA (GBOHIGAN)
JUSTICE FOR OIA (PPETTY)
TREASURY FOR ERIN NEPHEW
INR/RES (RWARNER)
CENTRAL AMERICAN CARIBBEAN BASIN COLLECTIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [JM](#) [XL](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#)
IMF, CJAN, CVIS
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY SHOWS NEW ENERGY AND UNITY
AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ATTACKS GOJ ON ECONOMY AND EXTRADITION

REF: REF: A. KINGSTON 699; B. KINGSTON 676; C. STATE 85807
[D](#). KINGSTON 634; E. KINGSTON 613; F. KINGSTON 611; G. KINGSTON 490
[H](#). 08 KINGSTON 884

Summary:

[1](#)1. (U) A seemingly rejuvenated and energized People's National Party (PNP) held its annual conference in Kingston over the weekend, at which party President and former Prime Minister (PM) Portia Simpson Miller (PSM) assailed the current Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) -led Government of Jamaica (GOJ) as "reckless," "bungling," and "incompetent" while publicly embracing former party rival Peter Phillips (Reftel H). United behind a new slogan - "Renewing the Hope, Securing the Future" - a new Strategic Plan, and a new Progressive Agenda, the PNP went to great lengths to present itself as cohesive, vigorous, and ready to challenge the JLP, in contrast to the image of division and disarray that has been on display over much of the past two years. End Summary.

"Recklessness of the Bruce Golding Administration"

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[1](#)2. (U) Incorporating elements of a religious revival, dancehall rave, and political rally, the raucous September 20th public conference session at Kingston's National Arena allowed PSM the opportunity to showcase her undisputed leadership of the party. Addressing a celebratory audience of hundreds of orange-clad PNP supporters, PSM lambasted PM Bruce Golding's two-year-old government on its management of the nation's economic crisis (Reftel D) and negotiations with the IMF (Reftel E), while defending the economic record of the previous PNP administration. In a show of unity, PSM publicly embraced vanquished rival Peter Phillips and former PM P. J. Patterson, then launched into a fiery attack on the JLP and Golding's two years in office that had the orange-clad rank and file on their feet. No mention was made of the PNP's turmoil and disarray over the past year, nor the ill-advised PNP strategy of challenging JLP Members of Parliament (MPs) holding dual citizenship that has resulted in the expenditure of scarce resources on a series of unsuccessful by-elections (Reftel F).

"The Driva Buy Him License"

[1](#)3. (U) Accusing the JLP of "unleashing unprecedented levels of

hardship on the Jamaican people," PSM excoriated the GOJ's economic record and accused the JLP of having failed to deliver on their 2007 campaign promises: to raise public sector salaries, provide free educational and medical services, divest state-owned Air Jamaica and sugar companies, and reduce the nation's spiraling crime rate. Reminding her audience that "we warned that it (the 2007 JLP platform) would wreck the country," PSM recalled PM Golding's 2007 campaign pledge that what Jamaica needed was a good manager and "driva." "It look like the drivu buy him license," PSM mocked to the cheering throng.

IMF: "Don't Bother To Come"

14. (U) PSM accused Golding and the JLP of "a series of bungling and missteps" in the GOJ's negotiations to establish a new borrowing relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a controversial issue given Jamaica's unpleasant history with the IMF in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Reminding her audience that Golding had told her in April 2009 that an IMF agreement was "neither necessary nor appropriate," PSM implied that the PM was misleading the Jamaican public into believing that IMF funds might

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be used to finance the GOJ's budget and/or fiscal deficit, when in fact they would only be available for foreign exchange stabilization or to pay off foreign creditors. Addressing reports that the IMF had cancelled a visit to the island in August, PSM alleged that the IMF was "increasingly impatient with the incompetent manner [in which] the discussions are being handled by the JLP government." She also accused the GOJ of covering up the fact that exasperated IMF officials had snubbed a JLP delegation in Washington. Without citing her sources, PSM quoted the IMF as warning "don't bother to come unless you can answer the critical questions" and called on the PM to divulge critical information on the IMF negotiations and "tell Jamaica what are these 'critical questions' that have been unanswered?" In response, GOJ Information Minister Daryl Vaz repudiated the allegation and implored the PNP "not to turn this IMF negotiation into a political football," while Minister of Finance Audley Shaw described PSM's accusation as "mischievous and totally false."

15. (U) At the conference's private session the previous day, PNP General Secretary, Spokesman for National Security Affairs, and MP Peter Bunting presented a new Progressive Agenda and a Strategic Plan to reorganize and reinvigorate the Party. Incorporating several elements of the 2007 Meeks Report commissioned after the PNP's 2007 general election defeat after 19 years in power, the plans call for a return to the Party's core principles, appointing a national campaign organizer, strengthening regional organizations, establishing an Anti-Corruption Commission, and rebuilding the PNP brand within the electorate. (NOTE: Prior to the conference, Bunting spoke with Poloff on the Coke extradition request and Jamaica's political situation. Reftel B. End Note). Similarly, the Party's new treasurer, Senator Mark Golding, attempted to distance the PNP from the seamier elements of its recent history by promising that it would accept only "clean" money from donors. Both the plans were adopted by the Party conference.

16. (SBU) The ongoing impasse over the Christopher "Dudus" Coke extradition request was addressed only obliquely (Reftel C). In his remarks, former National Security Minister Peter Phillips - who unsuccessfully challenged PSM for the PNP presidency at the Party conference in September 2008 - castigated the JLP for failing to implement the anti-crime agenda on which it had campaigned in 2007 and for "abandon[ing]...the people of Jamaica to donmanship as the country shirks its international obligations." (NOTE: Prior to the conference, Phillips spoke with Poloff on the Coke extradition request and internal PNP developments. Reftel A. End Note).

Conclusion and Analysis

17. (SBU) It was evident that, after two years of leadership

challenges, electoral defeats, and muddled messages, the PNP had gone to great effort to present a united front and a coherent theme. PSM was clearly energized by the raucous response to her attacks on Golding and the JLP, while the presence of Phillips at her side indicated that she has been successful in at least papering over the serious divisions that remain in the party over her leadership. Given the myriad political and economic crises confronting Golding and the JLP - economic malaise, labor unrest, IMF negotiations, and the Coke extradition imbroglio - the PNP has ample material and plenty of time with which to prepare for the next general elections, which must take place by 2012.

18. (SBU) The increased prominence of Peter Bunting and Mark Golding in key party roles - as General Secretary and Treasurer respectively - is noteworthy. Bunting and Golding (no relation to the current PM) suggest the emergence of a younger, more pragmatic generation of "Young Turks" within the PNP leadership. As a PNP advisor in the early 1990s, Bunting was instrumental in convincing PM Michael Manley, the passionate socialist of the 1970s, to pursue economic liberalization in the 1990s. Later, Bunting and Golding became wealthy as partners in the corporate finance and brokerage firm of Dehring Bunting & Golding before entering (re-entering, in Bunting's case) politics in 2007. Although there have been indications of disagreements over strategy between Bunting and the more populist PSM (Reftel G), the efforts of Bunting and Golding at

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rebranding the PNP now appear to have PSM's support. Whether Bunting will enjoy the same success in moderating PSM's more leftist tendencies remains to be seen, but a PNP featuring Bunting's financial acumen and PSM's rhetorical skills would be a formidable opponent for the JLP.

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